

March 8, 2016

Planning Commission Written Comments

SOUTH SQUARE/MLK Jr. COMPACT NEIGHBORHOOD (A1500016)

Brine – I voted against this proposed compact neighborhood for several reasons. US 15-501 Business passes through the proposed compact neighborhood. Once again there does not appear to be good pedestrian connectivity from the north side of the highway corridor to the South Square Station. Once again I am concerned about proceeding without having design work done and tools to protect and/or encourage affordable housing in place.

I agree that this area in general is ripe for redevelopment, especially the type of redevelopment that could support the light rail transit. Although the boundary for the proposed compact neighborhood seems to be very reasonable, I believe that doing the design work is necessary to confirm that perception.

One speaker pointed out the anticipated traffic delays from the at-grade crossing planned for Picket Road. Given the topology in the area, why can't the railway go under Picket Road?

Buzby – While I would prefer that the compact neighborhood be considered at the same time as the design districts, I believe this proposal is appropriate to approve at this time. I would urge that the design district proposal and the affordable housing policy under consideration be adopted as soon as possible to ensure that we have the tools required to make good, appropriate development decisions.

Freeman – Boundaries are good, but the guidelines to ensure affordability around the transit site not set. With a design district this site could be developed in a meadowmont way.

Ghosh – Recused.

Gibbs – Voted for proposal. And forwarding to C.C. / Co. Comm. Great potential for needed development served by several modes of transportation. Ridership improvements. Proposed.

Harris – Voted yes.

Huff – I urge the elected officials to vote against all of these amendments to the Future Land Use Map. We are being asked to create a group of Compact Neighborhood Tiers that will later become Design Districts each of which will have its own very specific attached zoning. We are asked to determine these boundaries without knowing what sort of configuration will exist within them. Once the Compact Neighborhood Tier is designated, the property will become more desirable and developers may seek to develop property without being subject to the Design District rules. It seems reckless to invite that. Also it is entirely possible that under the closer scrutiny occasioned by the actual establishment of real zoning there will be a need to adjust the overall boundaries we are presented with today.

If they are already set, that will be a problem. Finally, and I believe most importantly, these Compact Neighborhood Tiers and the accompanying Design Districts are supposed to provide affordable housing to those people using the transit system. Without strict enforceable regulations in place, those regulations that go with the actual creation of the Design Districts, we won't get for our community what we must as regards housing. So until these vital components are in place, I believe we should not draw the Compact Neighborhood Tier boundary lines. There are other specific problems with several of these proposed districts. The boundaries on these districts don't seem obviously problematic. I objected to approving the plan amendment for the reasons stated in the first paragraph.

Hyman – Move forward with a favorable recommendation. Motion failed.

Kenchen – No comments.

Miller – Again, for the reasons I have cited in the previous cases, we should not create a compact neighborhood tier so far in advance of a proposed design district. Let's keep working and when our planning is finished, adopt everything at once. The council and BOCC should vote against this case. Also, I am concerned that the portion of the proposed tier north of Chapel Hill Boulevard is too isolated for the rest of the district. There is no safe pedestrian access and the light rail will provide no access because there is no station nearby on the north side.

Riley – Voted no; difficult to make a decision on the boundaries for a design district until it is clear how the design district will function; see comments on A1500014. Affordable housing issues still; remain pedestrian access across road issues.

Vann – Intersection of 15-501. Change in land use patterns. One person spoke in favor and one spoke against amendment. I voted yes because I believe this is the most ideal stop.

Whitley – I voted to approve.

Winders – See GENERAL comments under A1500014

SOUTH SQUARE/MLK JR SPECIFICS

- The change of tier from Suburban to Compact Neighborhood, by itself without rezoning, will result in immediate increase in allowable intensity in significant amounts of land zoned commercial or office/institutional without development plans. Thus, this plan amendment will limit options for incentivizing affordable housing in this area where transit is already very good and the current concentration of affordable housing is low. Private investment is an especially important affordable housing strategy here because there is less publicly owned land than there is downtown.